

***Eureka* Stop**

#10 The Passenger Experience: A Culture of Its Own

If you could have looked upon the ferryboat *Eureka* in 1930, you would have been witness to the height of ferry travel across the Bay. Imagine being a newcomer to this scene.

After buying a ticket in the Ferry Building in San Francisco, you make your way to the waiting area and then down a creosote-scented corridor. Suddenly you are out in the open air and are confronted by the huge white mass of the *Eureka*. You step onto her wooden lower deck, make your way up a large stairway, and then inside. You see row upon row of pew-like seats facing both directions. After settling yourself in one of them you are suddenly confronted by a man with a perturbed expression.

“Excuse me...” he says. “...but you’re sitting in my seat.”

“I’m sorry...” you reply “... I didn’t know this seat was reserved.”

“None of these seats are technically reserved,” he says, “...but this is where I always sit. All of us here play cards. That’s why we have congregated together. If you look around you’ll see other groups occupying themselves with checkers, book discussion, or whatever. But this here is my seat.” As you rise and look around you see that he is right. The whole deck is filled with these groups.

Looking for a new seat, you walk past the bustling restaurant with the aroma of roast beef and vegetable soup. A little further you step out onto the open deck where the smell of salt-air replaces that of food and you notice the *Eureka* is no longer docked. You see the receding skyline of the city and the white washed paddle wheel tracks left astern in the waters of the bay. You sense a magical quality of the *Eureka* and no longer feel like the newcomer you were when you first came aboard. Now you understand how passengers could get proprietary about such things as where they sat.

Finally, as *Eureka* docks at the end of her trip, you find yourself thinking about next time. No other ferryboat will do of course. Only your boat, the *Eureka*, will do.